

CALENDAR OF THE EGYPTIAN.
FARMER BOOK

a god of the corn, nothing could be more natural than that he should be mourned at midsummer. For by that time the harvest was past, the fields were bare, the river ran low, life seemed to be suspended, the corn-god was dead. At such a moment people who saw the handiwork of divine beings in all the operations of nature might well trace the swelling of the sacred stream to the tears shed by the goddess at the death of the beneficent corn-god her husband.

And the sign of the rising waters on earth was accompanied by a sign in heaven. For in the early days of Egyptian history, some three or four thousand years before the beginning of our era, the splendid star of Sinus, the brightest of all the fixed stars, appeared at dawn in the east just before sunrise about the time of the summer solstice, when the Nile begins to rise.¹ The Egyptians called it Sothis, and regarded it as the star of Isis,² just as the

¹ L. Ideler, *Handbuch der mathematischen itnd Uchnischen Chronologic* i. 124 sqq. ; R. Lepsius, *Die Chronologie der Aegyptcr* i. 168 sq. ; F. K. Ginzcl, *Handbuch der mathematischen 2ind tecJmischoi Chronologie*, i. 190 sq. ; Ed. Meyer, *' Nachtrage zur agyptischen Chronologic," *Abhandliingcn der konigl. Preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1907 (Berlin, 1908), pp. ii sq. ; *id.*, *Geschichte des Alterttimss* i. 28 sq., 99 sqq. The coincidence of the rising of Sinus with the swelling of the Nile is mentioned by Tibullus (i. 7. 21 sq.) and Aelian (*De notitra ammaHum*, x. 45). In

later times, as a consequence of the precession of the equinoxes, the rising of Sinus gradually diverged from the summer solstice, falling later and later in the solar year. In the sixteenth and fifteenth century B.C. Sirius rose seventeen days after the summer solstice, and at the date of the Canopic decree (238 B.C.) it rose a whole month after the first swelling of the Nile. See L. Ideler, *op. cit.* i. 130; F. K. Ginzcl, *op. cit.* i. 190; Ed. Meyer, " Nachtrage zur agyptischen Chronologic," pp. II sq. According to Censorinus (*De. die natali* xxi. 10), Sirius regularly rose in Egypt on the

twentieth of July (Julian calendar);

and this was true of latitude 30° in Egypt (the latitude nearly of Heliopolis and Memphis) for about three thousand years of Egyptian history. See L. Ideler, *op. cit.* i. 128-130. But the date of the rising of the star is not the same throughout Egypt; it varies with the latitude, and the variation within the limits of Egypt amounts to seven days or more. Roughly speaking, Sirius rises nearly a whole day earlier for each degree of latitude you go south. Thus, whereas near Alexandria in the north Sirius does not rise till the twenty-second of July, at Syene in the south it rises on the sixteenth of July. See R. Lepsius, *op. cit.* i. 168 sq. ; F. K. Ginzel, *op. cit.* i. 182 sq. Now it is to be remembered that the rising of the Nile, as well as the rising of Sirius, is observed earlier and earlier the further south you go. The coincident variation of the two phenomena could hardly fail to confirm the Egyptians in their belief of a natural or supernatural connexion between them.

² Diodorus Siculus, i. 27. 4 ; Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris*, 21, 22, 38, 6.1 ; Porphyry, *De antro nympharwn*, 24 ; Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius, ii. 517; Canopic decree, lines 36 sq. ^ in W. Dittenberger's *Orientis Graeci hi-*